

Exploring the Efficacy of Mindfulness Interventions for Stress Reduction among Special Education Teachers: A Quasi-Experimental Study at Mano Vikas Special School, at Sasthankotta, Kollam

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Area/Section: Health Science

Type of the Paper: Regular Paper

Type of Review: Peer Reviewed as per [C|O|P|E|](#) guidance.

Indexed in: OpenAIRE.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14710181>

Google Scholar Citation: [IJHSP](#)

How to Cite this Paper:

Mary Shaiby, C. G. & Dr. Devaseelan S. (2024). Exploring the Efficacy of Mindfulness Interventions for Stress Reduction among Special Education Teachers: A Quasi-Experimental Study at Mano Vikas Special School, at Sasthankotta, Kollam. *International Journal of Health Sciences and Pharmacy (IJHSP)*, 8(1), 46-57.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14710181>

International Journal of Health Sciences and Pharmacy (IJHSP)

A Refereed International Journal of Srinivas University, India.

Crossref DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47992/IJHSP.2581.6411.0125>

Received on: 08/06/2024

Published on: 20/06/2024

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article investigates the efficacy of mindfulness interventions in reducing stress levels and improving the subjective well-being of special educators at Mano Vikas, in Sasthankotta, Kollam, focusing on identifying key factors contributing to their overall well-being and job satisfaction.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The methodology employed a quasi-experimental study design with a deductive approach. The research uses a quantitative approach to data collection. Further, this study aids in assessing the effectiveness of mindful practices in mitigating stress and enhancing the subjective well-being of special educators at Mano Vikas Special School. A sample of 15 teachers were included in this study. Questionnaires such as Depression, Anxiety Stress Scale -21 (DASS-21), Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ-15) and Subjective Wellbeing Scales were provided to collect information that how their stress, anxiety, depression, and mindfulness positively influence their Subjective Well-Being. Here 'stress' acts as a moderate variable. Since this is a quasi-experimental study, controlled groups were not included.

Finding/Result: After exploring and analyzing the facts, it is found that a significant presence exists a negative relationship between Subjective well-being, Mindfulness and Stress.

Originality/Value: This study employs a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effect of a structured mindfulness intervention on indicators like stress, well-being, and work satisfaction among participants (teachers). This study also seeks to investigate potential mechanisms for mindfulness therapies, such as enhancing self-care routines, avoiding negative ruminations, and improving emotional regulations which lead one to integral subjective well-being. Paper Type: Quasi-experimental Study Article.

Key Words: Quasi-Experimental Study, Stress, Mindfulness Intervention, Special Education Teachers, Subjective Well-Being.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Special education teachers confront difficulties in today's hectic and demanding learning environments, which can have a negative influence on their well-being and productivity in the classroom. Special education instructors frequently experience elevated levels of stress and burnout due to the demanding nature of their profession as well as the emotional and behavioral complexity of their students. Researchers and educators are turning increasingly to mindfulness that has gaining increasing popularity for lowering their stress and boosting well-being in the environment of special education.

In the ancient contemplative traditions, the term mindfulness is well-known because of its capacity to improve psychological resilience and general well-being. The mindfulness practices are beneficial as they foster present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts and feelings. This research focuses on special educators' well-being and is seldom found in present studies despite the mounting interest and anecdotal evidence in favour of mindfulness therapies to enhance subjective wellbeing. This quasi-experimental study aims to close the gap by examining the efficacy of mindfulness practices in reducing stress. For stress reduction among special education instructors at

Mano Vikas Special School in Sasthamkotta, Kollam. This study uses a quasi-experimental methodology to assess the impact of a structured mindfulness program on stress, well-being, and work satisfaction metrics in teacher participants. It also aims to explore the potential mechanism by which mindfulness therapies could work, including improved self-care routines, less rumination, and improved emotional regulation.

The expected outcome of this research article and its significant implications for both academic inquiry and practical application in special education. will enhance the overall well-being of special educators. Mindfulness interventions could be a valuable tool for improving the well-being of special education teachers by allowing them to give better support and educate pupils who have various learning difficulties efficiently. Furthermore, by identifying the underlying processes of mindfulness therapies, this research can help to develop targeted interventions and support techniques for special education instructors to address their specific stressors. Finally, by putting educators' well-being first, this study hopes to create a more supportive and sustainable learning environment for both teachers and learners.

2. OBJECTIVES:

This research article intends to understand issues related to stress that cause stress exhaustion among special education teachers. Further, it also interrogates whether there is any positive relation between stress and burnout syndrome. If at all there exists any positive relation, what are the contributing factors that enhance or mitigate this relationship? Since this positive relation adversely affects the efficacy of their job and satisfaction, a deeper study of the same is needed. Hence, this study tries to investigate numerous factors which establish a link between mindfulness, stress and subjective well-being syndrome among schoolteachers and tries to recuperate burnout syndrome that can make schoolteachers more vulnerable in their lives. The precise goals of this quasi-experimental study are the following:

- (1) To determine the connection between Mindfulness, Stress and Subjective well-being among schoolteachers.
- (2) To have an in-depth knowledge of the problems and their negative impacts on the teaching career, which can later become a subject matter for Mega research.
- (3) To arrive at new insights into the topic by exploring the nuances of the concepts and their variables by conducting intervention on the experimental group alone
- (4) To have an in-depth knowledge of the variables like mindfulness, stress and subjective well-being. that leads to identifying real problems by formulating concepts and hypotheses for Mega research with better clarity.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE/ RELATED WORKS:

3.1. Stress:

Stress is the body's reaction to challenges, triggering a “fight or flight” response (McEwen & Karatsoreos, 2020) [1]. While short-term stress can be helpful, chronic stress harms physical and mental health. It can cause headaches, high blood pressure, weakened immunity, and heart disease, as well as anxiety, depression, irritability, and concentration problems (Mayo Clinic, 2023) [2]. Chronic stress also disrupts sleep and appetite, leading to unhealthy habits. Managing stress effectively is crucial for preserving overall health and well-being (Seaward, 2017) [3]. Several studies demonstrate that professional stress is unquestionably the primary source of pressure. It is a general the body's response to any perceived condition that develops when the pressure is greater than the response (Stress=Pressure>Response) (Handbook of Stress Series, Volume 1, 2016) [4]. Positive stress, also called eustress, is a form of stress that can be good for the body and mind. It arises from overcoming obstacles and can be constructive, energizing, and motivating. Negative stress, on the other hand, can lead to anxiety and excessive. (Hargrove et al., 2015) [5]. Negative stress, or distress, happens when stress becomes overwhelming and harmful. It can be triggered by one's work pressures, personal challenges, major life changes, and internal factors like perfectionism (Flett & Hewitt, 2020) [6]. Symptoms include physical issues (headaches, fatigue), emotional disturbances (anxiety, depression), and behavioural changes (withdrawal, substance abuse) (Leikin, 2007) [7]. If unmanaged, it can cause serious health problems like heart disease and mental disorders. Coping strategies include relaxation techniques, regular exercise, healthy lifestyle habits, and seeking support. Addressing negative stress is

an important remedy for maintaining overall health and well-being (Sharma et al., 2024) [8]. Not only does stress impede cognitive function, but it also damages relationships with others by escalating emotions to the point of resentment, mood swings, and a helpless or overwhelmed sensation (Scott et al., 2015) [9]. Although stress is a normal reaction to the pressures of life, excessive Stress can lead to harmful effects on both physical and mental well-being. (Kemeny, 2003) [10]. People can lessen the impacts of stress and foster general resilience and well-being by recognizing its sources and effects and putting appropriate coping mechanisms into practice. (Wicks, 2005) [11]. Cognitive-behavioural strategies help to reduce stress by altering negative thinking and behaviours. (Wenzel, 2017) [12]. This involves recognising and changing unhelpful thoughts, engaging in enjoyable activities, solving problems effectively, practising mindfulness, using relaxation techniques, managing time better, and tracking stress triggers to improve coping and overall well-being. (Wells-Federman et al., 2001)[13].

3.2. Mindfulness Intervention:

Mindfulness entails being completely present and non-judgmental, which helps lower stress by increasing awareness and control over emotions (Hede, 2010) [14]. It assists individuals in managing stress responses, relaxing physically, and building resilience. Practices like mindful breathing and meditation keep the mind focused on the present, improving clarity and reducing stress, which enhances overall well-being (Sukh, & Sharma, 2023) [15]. A mindfulness intervention is a structured program that teaches techniques like meditation and breathing exercises to help individuals manage stress, improve mental health, and enhance well-being by fostering present-moment awareness (Ingram et al., 2019) [16]. Thus, mindfulness interventions teach techniques like meditation to help individuals manage stress by fostering present-moment awareness (Frazer & Stathas, 2015) [17]. These practices reduce stress by promoting calm and thoughtful responses to triggers, leading to better emotional regulation and overall well-being (Ryan, 2012) [18]. Similarly, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) didn't significantly benefit illness-related results in comparison to moderate aerobic activity. Thus it helps to reduce missed workdays due to acute respiratory infections. Additionally, early studies suggest interventions on mindfulness may reduce stress symptoms and enhance the quality of life in fibromyalgia patients (Schmidt et al., 2011) [19]. Working with mindfulness can help you effectively manage stress at work (Rupprecht & Walach, 2016) [20]. You may lessen stress and enhance your general well-being by keeping your attention here and now and observing your thoughts and feelings without passing judgment (Kashdan & Ciarrochi, 2013) [21]. Thus, one can inquire with many methods of awareness, including yoga, meditation, and deep breathing. By doing so, stress levels can be significantly lowered by taking a brief break from work to concentrate on breathing (Brown & Gerbarg, 2012) [22]. It clears away unproductive thoughts, brings clarity, and deepens self-understanding. It enhances your health, happiness, social connections, self-control, brain function, productivity, and perspective. There are five main brain waves that we experience in varying combinations. Meditation typically increases alpha brain waves, which range from eight to twelve cycles per second. Alpha waves are linked to a relaxed and restorative state, promoting calmness and inner focus without reacting to the environment. Thus, practicing Meditation is like mental hygiene which helps to alleviate such related diseases (Dr Eric Holsapple, 2023) [23].

3.3. Special Education Teachers:

Special education teachers assist students who have various disabilities, providing them with customized support and education (Fernández-López et al., 2013) [24]. They create and implement Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), modify curriculum, and use specialized teaching methods to meet each student's needs (İlik & Sarı, 2017) [25]. They also develop behaviour management strategies, collaborate with other educators and parents, and continuously assess student progress (Menzies & Bruhn, 2010) [26]. These teachers advocate for their students, offering both academic and emotional support. Their work is guided by patience, flexibility, strong communication skills, and a solid understanding of special education laws, making a significant impact on their students' lives (Regis blog, 2023) [27].

3.4. Subjective Well-being:

Well-being has been conceptualized in terms of a healthy individual's physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional dimensions that facilitate the synchronization of personal experiences (Arora et al., 2013) [28]. Whereas Subjective Well-being (SWB) refers to how an individual experiences and evaluates one's inner experience, one's basic life aspects positive mental health and his/her well-being (Diener et al., 1997) [29]. It has three components – positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction (Diener, 2000) [30]. This is marked by an elevated degree of a high level of satisfaction with life that has both positive affect and a low-level of negative affect (Snyder & Lopez, 2001) [31]. SWB has got twin elements, subjective, and objective well-being. Subjective well-being concentrates on personal and internal features while objective well-being considers external facets of human living (Alatartseva & Barysheva, 2015) [32]. For secular people, Subjective well-being is a scientific term for happiness (Seligman & Csikszentmiholy, 2000) [33]. Research has indicated that individuals with high subjective well-being are found to be healthy, outgoing, well-educated, well-paid, optimistic, worry-free, religious, with higher self-esteem, and modest aspirations (Headey et al., 1985) [34]; extraverted and avoiding undue worrying (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998) [35]; emotionally stable and have high affiliation with everyone (Denier, 1999) [36]; have concrete goals and realistic approaches (Baron, 2000) [37]; encompass collective agreement on good and positive life (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008) [38]; experience joy, contentment and have the view that their life is good, meaningful, and worth full (Lyubomirsky et al., 2011) [39].

Table 1: Literature Summary

Sl. No	Area & Focus of the Research	The result of the Research	Reference
1	The role of mindfulness in psychiatric care. It focuses on practices of mindfulness-based therapies which prioritize nonjudgmental acceptance and presentmoment awareness	The use of mindfulness-based therapies in mental health treatment is examined in this article. It adds to a better understanding of the role of mindfulness in psychiatric care as well as the possible advantages it may have for patients. It explores how these practices which prioritize nonjudgmental acceptance and present-moment awareness—can support conventional therapies like cognitive-behavioural therapy and medication.	Shapero et al. (2018). [40]
2	Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression. It focuses on how to examine and reframe negative thought patterns that perpetuate depression and adapt to meditation and mindful awareness for reducing depression symptoms.	The book teaches readers how to get more aware of their thoughts, sensations, and physical experiences, in addition to how to examine and reframe negative thought patterns that perpetuate depression. Readers are led to adopt a more accepting and empathetic perspective on themselves and their experiences through mindfulness techniques such as meditation and mindful awareness, which increase resilience and reduce the chance of depressive relapse.	Segal et al. (2012). [41]
3	Special education teacher burnout focuses on enhancing teachers'	The article by Brunsting, Sreckovic, and Lane (2014) examines burnout in special education teachers, emphasizing their increased risk due to	Brunsting et al. (2014). [42]

	well-being and performance.	demanding workloads, difficult student behaviors, and insufficient support. The study calls for efforts to alleviate these challenges to enhance teacher well-being and performance.	
4	Promoting enhanced practices in special education. It focuses on professional development, mentorship, and the application of evidencebased practices.	The article by McLeskey (2011) centers on improving the practices of special education teachers. It outlines strategies to enhance instructional methods and ensure ongoing support for teachers' success. The author recommends focused professional development, mentorship, and the implementation of evidence-based practices. McLeskey highlights the crucial role of school leadership in cultivating an environment that fosters ongoing development and efficient teaching in special education.	McLeskey (2011). [43]
5	Stress and high turnover rates among special educators. It focuses on heavy workloads, emotional strain, and reduce support and calls for systemic changes to improve teacher retention and reduce burnout.	The article by Hester, Bridges, and Rollins (2020) highlights the stress and high turnover rates among special educators, who often feel overburdened and undervalued. The study identifies heavy workloads, emotional strain, and lack of support as key contributors to these issues and calls for systemic changes to improve teacher retention and reduce burnout.	Hester et al. (2020). [44]
6	Teacher burnout in special education: The causes and the recommended solutions. It highlights factors like high job demands and lack of support and recommends improvements	The article by Fore, Martin, and Bender (2002) explores the causes of burnout among special educators who offers solutions. It highlights factors like high job demands and lack of support and recommends improvements such as enhanced professional development, better administrative support, and improved working conditions to help reduce burnout and support teacher retention.	Fore et al. (2002). [45]
7	Improving organizational interventions for stress and well-being. It speaks about different methods for creating healthier work environments	The book by Biron, Karanika-Murray, and Cooper (2012) examines ways to improve for managing stress and improving employee well-being within organizations. It covers various techniques for fostering healthier workplace environments, including efficient stress management initiatives, supportive policies, and a positive organizational culture. The authors highlight evidence-based practices and practical advice for organizations to reduce stress and boost employee well-being.	Biron et al. (2012).[46]

8	Stress and well-being at work. It focuses on stressors like job demands and role ambiguity and suggests strategies for managing stress and improving well-being, including organizational support and stress management interventions	The article by Griffin and Clarke (2011) explores workplace stress and its cause on employee wellbeing. It covers stressors like job demands and role ambiguity and suggests strategies for managing stress and improving well-being, including organizational support and stress management interventions. The article highlights the need to address stress to boost employee health and performance.	Griffin and Clarke (2011). [47]
9	Mindfulness-based stress reduction for stress management in healthy people. It focuses on managing stress in healthy individuals through MBSR	Chiesa and Serretti (2009) review and analyze research on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for managing stress in healthy individuals. The study shows that MBSR effectively lowers stress and improves well-being, indicating its value as a stress management tool.	Chiesa and Serretti (2009). [48]
10	Stress and subjective well-being among firstyear UK undergraduate students. It focuses on stress management and psycho-educational interventions for building confidence and helping the new students face the challenges	This is the first UK study which applies positive psychology as an approach to investigate the characteristics that facilitate adjustment among new university students. This study also includes stress management and psycho-educational interventions for building confidence and helping the new students face the challenges of the university without being stressed	Denovan and Macaskill (2017). [49]

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The main objective of this investigation is to know more about mindfulness and its importance in reducing stress and increasing subjective well-being among teachers who experience higher stress. This quasi-experimental study ascertains the relationship among the study variables like mindfulness, subjective well-being, and stress with a deductive approach. The objective is to evaluate how mindful practices can reduce stress and improve subjective well-being among special education teachers at Mano Vikas Special School. A sample of 15 teachers were selected and analysed quantitatively. Teachers' stress has been proven to be inversely related to their subjective well-being. For the present quasi-experimental research, three scales were used such as DASS-21 (Lovibond and Lovibond, 1995), Subjective Well-being (Sell and Nagpal, 1992), and Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, Button, Krietemeyer, Sauer & Williams, 2008). These instruments were used to gather primary data on how stress, anxiety, depression, and mindfulness impact teachers' subjective well-being, with stress serving as a moderating variable. The secondary sample sources of data were collected through academic journals, books, and other reputable sources, to explore the meaning and cultural contexts associated with mindfulness, stress, and subjective well-being. The study's major goal was to identify stressors and how mindfulness influences instructors' subjective well-being. It is discovered that there exist negative correlations between variables under examination, therefore these can be used in a largerscale research study with this quasi-experimental design.

We have also framed hypotheses for this research study as detailed below.

Null Hypothesis

There is no association between the mindfulness role in reducing Stress and enhancing the Subjective well-being of special educators.

Alternate Hypothesis:

1. There will be no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores regarding the study variables of mindfulness, stress, and SWB.
2. A Mindfulness Interventional Program (MIP) would significantly reduce the Stress level of special educators and enhance the Mindfulness and SWB of the teachers in the experimental group in Pre-test and, Post-test scores.
3. The higher the level of Mindfulness the higher will be SWB and the lower will be Stress.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

This study aims to investigate the impact of mindfulness interventions on reducing stress and enhancing subjective well-being (SWB) among special education teachers. The research identified significant relationships between mindfulness, stress, and SWB, through a quasi-experimental design of quantitative analysis. The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in helping teachers to manage their stress and to improve their mental health. This will increase their efficiency in the most demanding profession of teaching special children.

To get a clear picture of this process, the researcher conducted a 'Paired Samples Test' (t-test), and the result of this test is given below:

Table 2: Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 PERCENTAGE - PPSUB	-15.167	8.172	2.359	-20.359	-9.974	-6.429	11	.000
Pair 2 TOTALDASS21 - PTDASS	19.583	5.885	1.699	15.844	23.322	11.528	11	.000
Pair 3 TOTALANXIETY - PTAnx	6.750	2.896	.836	4.910	8.590	8.074	11	.000
Pair 4 TOTALDEPRESSION - PTDep	5.917	2.678	.773	4.215	7.618	7.652	11	.000
Pair 5 TOTALSTRESS - PTStr	6.917	2.712	.783	5.193	8.640	8.834	11	.000
Pair 6 PERCENTAGE - PPFFM	8.2500	2.5470	.7353	-9.8683	-6.6317	-11.220	11	.000

Expansion of abbreviations: PPSUB Post-test Percentage of Subjective Well-being; PTDASS Post-test of Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale; PTAnx Post Test Anxiety; PTDep Post Test Depression; PTStr Post Test Stress; PPFFM Percentage of Post-test Five Facet Mindfulness

The paired samples test reveals significant differences between all the variable pairs, with p-values of .000 across the board. The results show that the "Percentage" scores of PPSUB and PPFFM were consistently lower than the pre-test scores of PPSUB and PPFFM. The comparison of the scores of DASS-21 in the pre-test and the post-test clearly shows that the total value of the post-test becomes less than the pre-test after the intervention. The confidence intervals and t-values further support these findings, confirming strong statistical significance for each comparison. These results indicate meaningful differences between the paired variables, which is essential for understanding the relationships in this study.

Thus, the 'Paired Samples Test' revealed significant changes between pre-test and post-test scores for variables such as mindfulness, stress, anxiety, depression, (DASS-21) and SWB. All paired comparisons had p-values of .000, indicating a high level of statistical significance. These results confirm that the Mindfulness Interventional Program (MIP) had a positive effect, leading to notable improvements in the experimental group's post-test outcomes. Teachers experienced reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression, which resulted in increased SWB. For instance, Pair 1 showed a significant decrease in SWB percentage scores after the intervention (Mean difference = -15.167), and Pair 5 demonstrated a considerable reduction in stress levels (Mean difference = 6.917). These findings suggest that the mindfulness program not only lowered stress levels but also improved overall well-being, consistent with existing research on mindfulness and mental health.

Moreover, the results supported the study's alternate hypotheses. The significant differences in pre-test and post-test scores for mindfulness, stress, and SWB confirmed Hypothesis 1, while the reduction in stress and the increase in mindfulness and SWB validated Hypothesis 2. Additionally, the inverse relationship between stress and SWB, along with the positive link between mindfulness and SWB, supported Hypothesis 3. Thus, the study demonstrated that mindfulness plays a key role in boosting well-being and reducing stress in special education teachers.

The negative correlations between mindfulness, stress, and subjective well-being align with existing theories that mindfulness helps with self-regulation and stress management which is crucial for improving well-being. Given the challenges that special education teachers face, mindfulness interventions can help them better handle the pressures of their roles, benefiting both the teachers and their students.

6. CONCLUSION:

This study focused on the subjective well-being of the special school education teachers. The various stressors they undergo both in their professional and personal lives make them more inefficient and ineffective. This article not only explored the various stressors which diminish the subjective well-being of special schoolteachers but also provided some useful methods to irradicate such stressors and to enhance subjective well-being. It is observed that Mindfulness interventions could be a valuable tool for improving the well-being of special education teachers. These interventions give them better support and make them efficient in educating their pupils who have various learning difficulties. In addition to this, by identifying the underlying processes of mindfulness therapies, this research helps to develop specific interventions and supporting strategies for special school instructors to address adequately their stressors. Thus, this study creates a more supportive and sustainable system of education in the current scenario of education.

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